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# ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

## AN AID TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

**English for Engineers.** By S. A. Harbarger, Department of English, the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. Cloth. \$2.00.

*English for Engineers* is a common-sense title for a common-sense book. According to the preface "the object of this textbook has been to make the study of English definite for the engineering student, and to stimulate his interest in a brief but comprehensive survey of the immediate uses to which English may be put by the engineer."

An examination of the book will show that practically all the forms of writing—and speech—with which the engineer is particularly concerned are treated. There are chapters dealing with the forms essential to general professional writing—the explanation, the abstract, the summary, the editorial, the article for technical publication, and the engineering report. The professional society meeting has at last received attention. This wonderful opportunity, which so often becomes a bore—the reading of a paper before fellow specialists—is handled as a definite thing, quite capable of organization. Let us hope that this chapter may avert much waste of time from rambling dissertations and aimless discussion. The amount of space—practically half the book—devoted to a study of the various forms of business letters is an indication of the importance of this form of writing. Some may feel that undue emphasis has been placed on the writing and dictation of business communications, but the treatment of this subject is definite and complete, so the question of proportion is of little consequence.

No one should receive the impression that *English for Engineers* is a complete-letter-writer or a compendium of errors. It should stimulate the engineer to think of the necessity for the effective use of his mother tongue, and to begin raising the level of all his communications. The chapter on English for non-technical uses is a timely guide to reading for pleasure and profit for men who feel the need of more breadth than can be obtained in a strictly technical course.

The last chapter sets forth clearly the two objectives of the study of English: The acquirement of "remorseless and scientific efficiency in the use of words," and the glimpsing "of the cultural things of life." Pointing the way to attainment of these objectives seems, really, to be the aim of the whole book. *English for Engineers* is a fine piece of work.

## THE ROMANCE OF RAILROADING

**The Wreckers.** By Francis Lynde.

"Most men like Lynde's books," said the librarian, as she handed me the copy of *The Wreckers*. And if all his novels are as absorbing as this tale of the struggle of a fearless man against a combination of greedy capitalists, such popularity is easily explained. *The Wreckers* is as full of thrills as the "Wild West" of boyhood days, yet free, for the most part, from the surprising and unnatural coincidences which are the main dependence of the wild west romancers. When things do happen "just in the nick of time" the author has us so much in sympathy with his characters that we feel he is telling the truth; things do happen in just that way, you know.

One might think that a stenographic position could offer little beyond monotonous thumping of the keys. Acquaintance with Jimmie Dodds, who tells the story, shows the falsity of that idea. Jimmie's devotion to his boss gets him into all kinds of difficulties and adventures. The thing which particularly enlists our sympathy for Jimmie is the way he often "spills the beans" by being overzealous for his beloved boss. We share his chagrin at having "pulled a boner" and are as glad as he when it finally works out all right anyhow.

Romance is there as well as thrills. The rescue of the kidnapped financier would not have been effected if the boss and Jimmie had not left the train to rescue the muff for Mrs. Sheila. All through the story the boss is nerved by his love for Mrs. Sheila to keep up the fight for service on the railroad against the promoters who are interested only in "milking" the property. The fight is one of action—of wrecked trains, of cut wires, and of dashes to the danger point in racing locomotives. *The Wreckers* is a book for real men.

From the Forest Products Laboratories at Madison, Wis., comes word of the invention of a new process of de-inking old newspapers for re-use. From Utah is reported the possibility of using timber heretofore found unfit to make pulp wood. This is important news in view of the fast thinning American forests which in turn threaten the supply of print paper.

The de-inking process involves the use of bentonite, a clay-like substance formed from a volcanic ash found in Wyoming.